

Roger Felt had been the Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad Agent in Fairview, Utah for four years when it was announced that the Fairview Agency, on the Sanpete branch line, would probably be closed in the near future.

Joseph Ely, then agent at Heber, Utah, was preparing to retire and move away. Roger became agent/telegrapher at the Heber Station at 6th West and Center Street on February 22, 1941.

Roger bought the home that Mr. Ely had built on railroad property. When school closed in Fairview, the last of May, Roger moved his family to Heber. Wife Margaret, sons Morris (12), Sharrol (9) and daughter Sandra (2).

Roger joined the American Legion Lockhart Post #23 and Margaret the American Legion Auxiliary as active members. They held various positions over the years. Roger also became a member of the Lions Club, the Chamber of Commerce and later the Knife and Fork Club.

Business on the railroad was very good with daily train service. Passenger service had been an important part during the earlier years. At this time, with an improved road through Provo Canyon and more automobiles, passenger train service had been discontinued. There was little call for it. However, a few who wished could travel to provo and back in the caboose.

Freight and express business was good. Also telegraph or Western Union. The unpleasant part of Western Union was during the war years, the Korean conflict and Viet Nam, when many of the telegrams reported casualties. Margaret, Morris and Sharrol helped Roger by delivering most of those. As the boys grew older and had after school jobs, Donald Call (son of J. Harold Call) did the delivering locally on his bicycle.

During live stock shipping, sheep and cattle; Roger often worked long hours (sometimes until very late at night) because, as the cars were loaded with the right number of animals, the cars were checked, doors locked with numbered metal seals and a record of each kept.

About 1930 and for some time after, the Heber Station was noted for shipping more sheep than any other live stock shipping point in the U.S.

A tragedy occurred one day when a brakeman was hit by a moving car which was being switched. He did not survive.

Express was now being taken over by express trucks with Bruce Smith as driver until he moved to the Uintah Basin. Then Loren Mair drove the truck.

Bad weather and deep snow through Provo Canyon and the high cost of maintaining poles and wires made it advisable to discontinue Western Union via the railroad office. Telegrams were then phoned in through Palace Drug.

For quite a number of years gilsonite in large bags came by truck from the mines in the Uintah Basin, unloaded onto docks west of the depot, then later loaded into box cars to be shipped to various locations. Large utility poles also were brought by truck from lumber camps to be shipped by rail.

Heber was also a wool shipping point from area sheep shearing corrals, where the large bags were temporarily stored on loading docks. One day an unexpected late spring rain, wind and snow storm caused the wool growers to cover the wool bags as quickly as possible to keep them dry.

One evening a strong wind storm caused electric wires in front of the station to be crossed. Sparks were flying. Quick action by the Light & Power Company and the fire department prevented a fire.

One night a man, confused by the glare of car lights, failed to make a turn and ran into the front of the station causing some damage.

Roger Felt

Another evening, a Midway man (who had been drinking) ran his Jeep right through the front of the building and into the office causing a great deal of destruction. Police were called and found the man still in his Jeep, not seriously injured. He thought he was one street farther south and was angry because someone had put a building across the road to Midway. Fortunately, there had been no one in the office at the time.

Roger, returning to work one morning, found the depot had been burglarized. It had been entered through the waiting room window. The grill in the ticket window was removed and stolen. The office was ransacked. A small weight scale, stamps, a small amount of money, 2 model air planes (made by Morris), one with a motor and a Heathkit radio and leather carrying case (built by Sharrol) were all stolen. The planes and radio had special sentimental value. Art work by Sandra was not damaged. Seems like a large wall clock was taken too. Nothing was recovered.

Trucks gradually took over rail shipping until there was little work for Roger to do, although he was expected to be in the office. He did a lot of reading and studying, always eager to learn. He also made beautiful hooked rugs for his family.

Late in 1967 railroad officials, men from the Interstate Commerce Commission, local businessmen and anyone interested, held a meeting in what is now the Sr. Citizen's Building, to discuss the closing of the Heber office.

Roger resigned for his annuity on January 1, 1968 and worked his last day in December 1967. A relief agent stayed at the office until it was officially closed early in 1968. Roger was presented with a pin for 48 years of continuous service with the exception for one period when he served in the U.S. Army at Fort Douglas, Utah and while he worked for Utah Fuel at Castle Gate, Utah. (4 years in all.)

Roger went to work at the Manti, Utah Rio Grande depot as an apprentice and was first employed as telegraph operator at Cuprum, Utah on April 24, 1916 at the age of 18, almost 19 years old.

Fifty two years from the time Roger was first employed by the Rio Grande, until he resigned January 1, 1968 at the age of seventy. Roger passed away on September 11, 1968 after a heart attack at the age of seventy one.

Many changes have taken place. Live stock pens, loading chutes and storage docks have been torn down. The station and property changed hands and the area is now a recreation center with small village, 'Old Heber' has been built and a variety of buildings moved in. There are gift and souvenir shops and eating places, antiques, an old jail and other places of interest and a large paved parking lot.

If Roger were here today he would be pleased with the activity and for the fact that many families from so many places (and especially the school children) are having the unique and interesting ride on the popular 'Heber Creeper' down colorful Provo Canyon.

~~Mrs. Roger Felt~~  
490 West Center  
Heber City, UT 84032

*Dr. Green*



RAILWAY EXPRESS

Roger Morrison Felt  
25 June 1897 - 11 Sept. 1968.